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“WHY I DO NOT GO TO SYNAGOGUE.”

A REPLY TO MR. C. MONTEFIORE'S INQUIRY IN HIS
ARTICLE “LIBERAL JUDAISM IN ENGLAND.”

“He must be a man of little faith who would fear to subject his own religion to the same critical tests to which the historian subjects all other religions.”

MAX MÜLLER.

IT may be deemed presumptuous on my part to take up the gage thrown down by Mr. C. Montefiore before “his old and dear friend,” and to anticipate the reply that will doubtless be given in due course to the question propounded by Mr. Montefiore in the current number of the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW. My justification and my apology must be that, very probably, the great interest excited by Mr. Montefiore's admirable paper will evoke many criticisms; and among the many I submit my humble effort as a small contribution to the anticipated discussion. In the main, I agree with the views expressed by the author of the article, although I think he has much underestimated the effects of that which may be styled, in general terms, the Modernity of Ideas, and also the immense influence of the recent and still continuing dissemination of scientific knowledge. Moreover, it seems to me that Mr. Montefiore has made no allowance for the changes that have undoubtedly taken place in recent years in the methods of investigation and in the enormous rise in the standard of historic accuracy.

It is far easier to give a reply to the simple question which Mr. Montefiore submits to “his old and dear friend” than to follow him through the intricacies of thought which

lead to the fundamental question, whether Judaism is or is not fitted to modern thought and practice. The reply to Mr. Montefiore's question is, in my own case, simple enough. I do not attend the Synagogue because (apart from the historic interests connected with the ancient cult) I have no sympathy with and cannot realize the benefits that can be derived from the services performed in the Synagogue or with the recitals of narratives relating to the early history, which, being miraculous and of the highest improbability, I cannot regard as true or, to speak frankly, of any value whatever. The theories of ethics that I hear are not those which I believe, and, to use general terms, my mind is transferred into a totally different sphere of thought. And as I am unable to accept the doctrines inculcated within the Synagogue, I, as every honest thinker would do, absent myself from attendance at the services. The position I am bound to assume, is, I regret to say, not only absence of sympathy with, but actual repugnance to, the whole scheme of Judaism. I cannot accept the chief dogmas which underlie historic Judaism. I cannot comprehend the "Chosen People." It is a phrase that has no meaning to me. The Divine Revelation at Sinai is to me a legendary epic of unknown authorship. The miraculous element is to my mind injurious to piety, and creates in me the sentiment of repulsion. Without considering whether miracles can or cannot take place, it is no exaggeration to allege that no recorded miracle rests on evidence sufficiently trustworthy to convince any but the most credulous of mankind. Judaism rests on the "Book" and on tradition—neither support can be regarded at the present day as valid. Mr. Montefiore admits that the law is not the law "which God gave unto Moses." That is an admission of immense importance. That the Pentateuch or Hexateuch is not the work of Moses or of the age of Moses is maintained by many of the most learned and best qualified authorities, and that admission carries with it a great part of early Jewish

history. The Patriarchs may or may not be historic characters, but their lives are given in tribal tales of little value. The legislative part of the Pentateuch is of more serious importance. The laws, especially those of Leviticus, are, in form, tribal laws, and, like most legal systems, the outcome of the age in which they were promulgated—many of such laws being formulated *ad hoc*, while others are adaptations or actual copies of the laws of neighbouring nations. It is hardly doubtful that the legislation concerning the Sabbath or seventh day of rest was adopted from the Babylonians. But the point of view which I desire readers of the REVIEW to accept is the entire loss of authority, as the inevitable result of the recent biblical criticism. At the time when the Sacred Books of the Hebrews were regarded as the work of Moses inspired by God the authority of such books was supreme. If the books can claim no kind of authority from divine inspiration, or even from famous authorship, they are relegated to that great mass of sacred and ancient records which have been collected, and which teach us many important matters respecting the religious aspirations of ancient peoples. It is asserted—I will hardly say yet that it is established—that not only is Moses not the author of the Pentateuch, but that the authorship as well as the dates of publication of the constituent parts are unknown, or not known with any degree of accuracy. The sacred literature is therefore anonymous—and anonymity is fatal to authority. Moreover the authority of the Sacred Books is further diminished by the appropriation of extensive contributions from the legends or sacred books of other nations—the chief contributions coming, as might be expected, from Babylon and from Egypt; while the three Great Festivals, to the celebration of which so much importance is attached in the Pentateuch, are sun festivals of immense antiquity and it would seem of almost universal acceptance. Of all festivals that of the Pentecost is perhaps the most universal. The celebration of the “First Fruits” is hallowed alike by all

ancient and still by most modern nations; and the absurd ceremonies on the First of May, with Jack-in-the-Green, are but survivals of the ancient feast commemorating the return of summer.

The history of the Hebrews, so remarkable and so unique, obtains *no* corroboration from external sources. A notable fact is, that for more than a century diligent search has been made among Egyptian monuments and records, with the earnest desire to discover some confirmation of the miraculous narrative of the Exodus, but as yet no such evidence has been obtained. Therefore the history of the greatest and most important migration of all time fails to be confirmed in any particular—and is still dependent upon the narratives found in the Pentateuch, written by an unknown author or authors at a date or dates probably never less than 800 years after the events related had occurred.

The great national Festival of the Passover is celebrated every year, with much enthusiasm in all the synagogues of the world where Jews do congregate. There are already many absentees, who are unable to accept the miraculous character of the narratives of the Exodus; and such number is likely to increase.

I should wish that sensible men, and women also, would ask themselves whether a history loaded with wonderful and supernatural incidents is likely to be a fair account of the events that happened. A general acceptance of such a history, wholly without corroboration from external authorities, is little like the careful practices of modern historians in separating truth from the mass of material which is often available. No subject during the last generation has been studied with more marked success than history, both ancient and modern. The principal object of the modern historian has been to correct the errors of previous generations and, by careful verification of facts, strive to arrive at truth, and with this important addition—wherever it is impossible to obtain verification

and corroboration, to submit to suspension of judgment. The standard of verification has been thus greatly raised. By these means there is some chance of reaching truth, a chance that the blind reception of tradition rendered impossible. Tradition, passing orally through a chain of witnesses none of whom left a record, is, to the modern historian, of very small value ; and it is on this species of evidence that Jews rely for the truth of some of the most astounding events ever alleged to have taken place. It is impossible for men of thought and learning to listen to evidence of this kind, without denial and protest : are they to be blamed if in the employment of the same methods of inquiry, which they and others use in the study of profane history, they arrive at the same sceptical conclusions in their inquiries concerning the events recorded in sacred history ? The legends of Greece and Rome have been separated from serious history by Grote and Niebuhr and others, and the same methods of verification which those distinguished authors have employed are now being used in the separation of truth from fable in the histories of the ancient Hebrews. The results obtained already give an earnest of that which may be expected. The sacred records teem with unhistoric wonders and divine interferences ; but it is no presumption to predict that the ultimate conclusion, when reached, will be to reduce the history to a more commonplace position, and to explain it by a reference to the characters of the Hebrew people and to their active imagination and poetic nature. The methods of history, like the methods of science, produce an intellectual result, which is a constant, it is a mental evolution, carrying the powers of the human mind to a higher level. The student of history or of science cannot within the Synagogue put aside his love of truth and his knowledge of the methods by which he is accustomed to attain it. It is not desirable that he should do so. A sacrifice of honesty and of truth can never be otherwise than deprecated ; and if he arrive at conclusions in opposition to the conventional

beliefs, he is more to be honoured than reviled. He is unable from his mental attitude to accept universal tradition as absolute truth, or the infringements of natural law as the well-proved results of scientific investigations. The great discoverers of this fast-ebbing century did not attain that knowledge which is alike the glory of the age and immense benefit to the world by lax acceptance of the traditions of the past or by loose verification of the results of their experiments. Their triumphs were attained only by careful inquiry and still more careful verification—and by those means alone can truth be obtained.

To return to the subject of tradition, which is so important in this inquiry. The value of tradition as history is declining—it has declined almost to vanishing-point. It has been and still is held by many learned Jews, who maintain that it is the foundation of Jewish belief. If it be so, it is a broken reed on which to rely. Now it is clear that all historic statements rest on evidence, whether good or bad, and as such must be criticized and classed like other kinds of evidence. To support a historical statement it is necessary to get a record of the facts, as soon after the occurrence as possible. It is obvious that, cross-examination of material witnesses being impossible, the next best evidence is the written record of an eye-witness immediately after the event. The record, if it is written at the end of a chain of oral transmissions, is worthless; and that is what we now possess. The Exodus may or may not have taken place in the way described by the writers in the Books of Deuteronomy and Exodus; but we possess no document written at a period nearer to the events than the descriptions of those writers. It is impossible to say whether there were ever contemporary historical documents or not. There are none in existence. The earliest written documents which we possess were written about 700 years in the case of Deuteronomy and still longer in the case of Exodus, after the events therein respectively narrated. Recent discoveries at the city of Nippur, on the banks of

the Euphrates, show the extreme antiquity of some records. Those found were probably written on clay tablets 5,000 years before the Christian Era. There are no difficulties respecting the reduction of the oral tradition into writing at so early a date ; but the non-existence of any early written documents is a fatal difficulty with regard to our reception of an uncorroborated Hebrew tradition.

Compared with other nations of antiquity there are no early Hebrew documents or monumental inscriptions of much importance. The records, both monumental and documentary, already discovered in Egypt carry back the history of that country more than 5,000 years, and such records in Assyria and Babylonia carry back the history of those countries nearly 7,000 years ; but we possess no early Hebrew records of any kind, and references to older writings in more recent books do not carry back consecutive history to the early days of the tribe. Records, to be regarded as of historic value and containing important narratives, must possess some approach to contemporaneity, and this advantage no Hebrew book or record possesses. It is not alleged that written documents never existed concerning the early history of the Hebrews. It is quite probable that such did exist from the prevalent habit of their kindred Semites to record events. But none have survived to later times ; and for the purposes of the historian non-existence is sufficient. Complete disbelief or suspension of judgment are the alternatives in these circumstances. On the other hand, the resolute believer relies on the traditions of his race as taking the place of documentary evidence, and as a complete substitute for that which the historian requires in dealing with profane subjects. In face of such contradictory views the philosophic thinker regards with feelings of dismay the high value attributed to tradition, and asks Where are the safeguards against error, when the simplest and most elementary rules of evidence are so thoughtlessly set aside ? The entry into the Synagogue gives rise to many thoughts

and to many doubts respecting the value and authenticity of the Hebrew Sacred Books ; and there are many whose minds, dwelling on and not doubting the noble thoughts and high aims contained in such books, feel doubts absolutely overwhelming concerning their authenticity, while being deeply impressed with the wholly human character of their contents. These conclusions separate and divide the believers from the non-believers, and can furnish many more reasons " Why the Liberal Jews do not attend the Synagogue."

The great change that has taken place in opinion during recent years, and the general decline in this generation of religious modes of thought, are doubtless due to various causes, but the most potent cause is the immense advance in scientific knowledge. It has both widened our intellectual horizon and sharpened our intellectual faculties. The knowledge we have obtained of the laws of nature and her modes and processes have been the *Revelation* of this century—attained, not by a divine act, and given in words on a remote mountain to an obscure people, but as the result of long and arduous work by many great minds in various countries, under many and various conditions. The difficulties that surrounded these philosophers in their work, and the amazing results obtained, make all humanity proud indeed of the men and their achievements. Mr. A. Balfour, in a recent speech, said that "the development of the mechanical conception of the physical world has given an impulse to materialistic speculation." It has achieved results of far higher importance than advocacy of a possible mechanical theory of the world. It has established by overwhelming proof the *certainly* of universal law and order—the co-ordination of all phenomena and the immensity of space—while exciting in our minds, whether we regard the cosmos or microcosm, the highest conceptions of power, wisdom and beneficence.

Many years ago Harriet Martineau said that all the sciences were arrayed against the Bible, and she wrongly predicted

that in fifty years the biblical narratives would be regarded as legendary. As a prediction in point of time she anticipated results, but as a prediction of that which will eventually come, she was not far from the truth. The first of the sciences to deal a heavy blow at the biblical narratives was geology. The contention, so long carried on and so hostile in its character concerning the early chapters of the Book of Genesis, was the type of the greater and equally hostile contention between “science and theology,” the literature of which is hardly pleasant reading. Happily in recent years the form of the contest has become decidedly more amicable, and as the victory greatly inclines to the side of science, the war, so barren of practical results, may soon be abandoned altogether. The discovery of the tablets at Babylon containing written records of the Creation legend and others with stories of the Flood indicated the sources from which the Hebrew writers obtained their information. The discoveries at Babylon and in Assyria also compel us to alter the biblical chronology considerably, and render the biblical accounts of the early age of the world of no value or importance. It is now generally admitted that geology and other sciences can be more relied on *for data* regarding the age of the earth than any early records of the ancient nations and the estimate of geology exceeds enormously the limited age of 5,000 to 6,000 years which Hebrew chronology allows to the planet and to the existence of man upon it. But the recent discoveries in astronomy reduce the inadequate narrative of Genesis almost to imbecility. “And he created the stars also,” is the remark used as a sufficient description of the multitude of suns, planets, moons, comets and other bodies which fill the heavens with light and beauty. Did the inspired writer possess any knowledge that the multitude was beyond computation and consisted of millions and millions of stars, of which over 100 millions have already been counted? and did such inspired writer suspect that every improvement in optical instruments (of which he knew nothing) would disclose

more millions of heavenly bodies, which he described in his ignorance as "the stars also"? Is it possible for a man possessing a particle of critical power to adopt as a serious contribution to knowledge the information found in such writings? Now I venture to urge the following general criticism. If the writer who originally introduced the Babylonian legends into the Book of Genesis is, from the extreme antiquity of the Book (which is doubtful), not to be blamed for his display of astronomical ignorance, the later editor or editors of that and other Pentateuchal Books cannot escape from condemnation. A subsequent editor who endorses the statements of an earlier writer is equally responsible for the truth of such statements as the writer. The importance of this criticism is that, assuming that the Book of Genesis is very ancient, and that it contains foreign legends, the editors of the other Books at the time of the exile adopted the legends as true history (and much belief depends on such adoption), and by such adoption prove themselves to be untrustworthy witnesses and editors who possess little or no authority.

Turning from these considerations respecting the Creation and the age of the world to the extremely important inquiry as to the possession of moral codes by the nations of antiquity, we find no evidence that the ancient peoples had no moral laws until the Revelation at Sinai; on the contrary, we can discover among the Egyptians and the great Mesopotamian Powers ample proof that the ancient nations of the East were *quite* as well equipped with moral laws and, as far as we know, practised morality with quite as much success as the ancient Hebrews. There is sufficient evidence that the Egyptians possessed moral laws equal to any code of morals that existed among the Hebrews. The ancient Book of the Dead, which was held in great estimation in Egypt, existed from the very early ages; and although it received additions in later times the 125th chapter contains moral doctrines similar to those contained in the Ten Commandments. It is believed by many persons conversant with

Egyptian theology that even the grand conception of unity can be found in ancient Egyptian records. The Assyrians and Babylonians also possessed moral laws of similar character to those found in the Bible. Indeed it is difficult how a great state with a large and prosperous population carrying on trade and commerce with foreign nations could exist without the fundamental moral precepts of the Decalogue, and we know beyond doubt that the Babylonian and the Egyptian monarchies existed long before there was a Hebrew polity or any codes of morality connected with that tribe.

In my judgment that which keeps away from the Synagogue the largest number of possible worshippers is the extreme anthropomorphism of the entire cult. This form of thought exists in the Bible to an extent that in many minds causes actual distress. It destroys and banishes every form of piety. The ritual cannot avoid sharing with the Scriptures the same defects and the same evils. To students of nature accustomed to the grand generalizations which science yields it is not less than a blasphemy to conceive of the Author and Governor of the universe in terms of the ritual. It is no doubt unjust to blame the authors of the ritual when the fault is that of the authors of the religion. The religion was doubtless in accord, centuries and centuries ago, with the aspirations and knowledge of the worshippers. It is not so now. Religious ideas are, like all other ideas, only mental pictures which we form in our minds. Such ideas are part of ourselves, dependent on our own environment as our environment is dependent on the knowledge, the education and the training of the age. The environment changes as the ages change; and absolute permanence can never be expected either in ideas or in institutions, for, as our minds change with the advance of knowledge, so do our ideas and our conceptions become wider and higher—and this means intellectual progress. The anthropomorphism of conventional Jewish beliefs is repulsive to the cultured man of the present day.

There are many Jewish doctrines and practices so unreasonable in themselves and so opposed to modern thought that they, in like manner, excite repulsion in our minds. Mr. C. Montefiore has referred to one, viz. Circumcision. I shall take leave to refer to another repulsive doctrine, viz. the doctrine of Atonement by Blood.

With regard to circumcision, it is quite impossible to say much. Its indecent character saves it from much adverse criticism, while its undoubted connexion in some way with the repulsive worship of the Phallus protects it from any attempt at explanation of its origin. I may, however, be permitted to refer to the rite from the historic point of view. It is called in the Old Testament a "mark and a sign." Now if it were introduced in Abraham's times it was neither the one nor the other: in Abraham's times it is supposed that nearly all Palestine was inhabited by circumcised peoples (not including the Hittites, who were not circumcised). If, as is probable, the Hebrews on entering Syria at the time of the exodus adopted the Syrians' rite its introduction would be accounted for. Centuries, later when the Hebrews left Babylon after the exile and returned to Syria, they carried with them their peculiar rite, and since then it has been permanent among the Jews. The Babylonians and Persians whom they quitted like the Assyrians were uncircumcised peoples, and it was only after the captivity that the rite became a mark and a sign, the conquests of Assyria and Babylon having in the meantime greatly modified the populations in Palestine. The story of the circumcision of the Jews escaping from Egypt is another proof that the rite was not regarded by the early Hebrews as either obligatory or general, and it is probable that it was one of the practices followed by them according to the environment.

With regard to the doctrine of the Atonement it is necessary to say that, independently of the Atonement by Blood—which is in my mind a doctrine of terrible portent, arising out of entirely misconceived ideas of God and his

mercy—I believe in the wisdom and usefulness of setting apart a day in the year as a day for introspection and review of one’s actions during the year. The results of an honest review and introspection are likely to lead to amendment of conduct both in the abandonment of evil ways and in the formation of good resolutions. But that hopeful and repentant frame of mind is not atonement. I am quite unable to realize the meaning of the atonement. It is, of course, part of the doctrine of the propitiation of the Creator by sacrifices and by the Shedding of Blood: but these are ancient rites of which we cannot feel or understand the full force and meaning or the sacredness which the ancients attributed to them. We do not wish to. We abhor the idea of shedding blood in honour of God, and we regard it as a blasphemy to countenance the idea that blood is acceptable to him and washes away sin. I protest that men of science cannot be expected to sanction the doctrine that God is propitiated by the blood of animals, or that the blood of animals carries the remission of sin. Surely these archaic ideas are fatal to true piety; and one regards the connexion between blood and repentance as a disgrace to ourselves and a repulsive feature in our belief. It is needless to point out that the later prophetic writers also regarded these sacrifices with little respect; but it is nevertheless true, and must be admitted, that during the whole existence of the Second Temple these sacrifices continued, and only ceased after the wars with Titus. The details of these sacrifices and the form of atonement are still appealed to with reverence on the day of atonement.

The Jewish festivals on examination appear to be the result of a combination of extremely ancient Semite rites with peculiar celebrations of the Hebrew tribe. This combination is especially discoverable in the festivals of Passover and Pentecost. The spring festival at the time of the Vernal Equinox was held in great honour by the early Semites, and was a festival to commemorate the “lambling” season—following the practice of expressing

gratitude to Almighty God for giving for another year the increase of the flock. The early Semites celebrated the return of spring, and the birth of these lambs, by a sacrifice. The Paschal lamb was killed, and the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the entrance to the tent or hut as evidence that the owner of the flock had performed his sacrifice, and had made his peace with his God. The sacrifice was eaten with unleavened bread by the whole family and household of the owner. Why unleavened bread? Because unleavened bread was the earliest and most ancient form of bread, and it reminded those who partook of it of the immense antiquity of the festival. This is, I believe, a true explanation of the Feast of Unleavened Cakes. The connexion of the celebration of this ancient rite with the Hebrew migration from Egypt is not apparent. However, it would seem that the founders of Judaism selected the day specially sacred to the herdsmen from early times as the day for celebrating the great anniversary of the exodus—the day of the birth of the Hebrew nation.

The festival of Pentecost partakes in a similar manner of the mixed characters of the Passover. The feast of Pentecost is a celebration of the return of summer, and was a festival also held in great esteem by the early Semite agriculturists. It was essentially a floral festival, and has been retained to the present day in various forms. This day was also selected by the founders of Judaism as appropriate on which to celebrate the amazing events alleged to have taken place on Mount Sinai. Thus two of the most ancient feasts of the early Semites were made to serve the purposes of the Hebrews as national festivals. The reconciliation or explanation of these curious details is to be discovered in the fact that Judaism, as we now understand it, was instituted and the laws regarding the celebration of festivals promulgated so long after the events to which they refer that there only remained a vague recollection of the ancient practices (for other

Semitic cults had taken the place of the ancient practices) and an earnest desire to give antiquity and additional respect to the national features the celebrations of which had been recently introduced. It is my wish not to push conclusions farther than the facts will reasonably permit, but I can discover no celebration of these festivals anterior to the time of King Josiah, and moreover there is no evidence of the regular and annual celebration of these holy days until the age of the Second Temple.

The little book which Mr. Montefiore quotes with commendation (Maccann, *Formation of Character*) contains many admirable remarks on the value of examples. He says, “they (examples) serve to purify and elevate our moral estimate of thought and actions.” The greatest value of the New Testament is probably to be found in the perfect character attributed to Jesus Christ. For the purposes of example, it is unnecessary to decide whether the life and character of Jesus Christ are historically true or not. The example of the beauty and righteousness of the character as presented in the New Testament furnishes ideals which no other history can equal. The personages in the Old Testament fail to supply any kind of ideal that can serve as an example either of the highest morality or the greatest virtue.

I shall select three prominent and typical Hebrews, whose lives are given in some detail in the Old Testament records—Abraham, Moses, and David. Not one of these can be accepted as providing an ideal of any value. Only one virtue stands prominent and significant, and that is obedience to the will of God, and that virtue even is not represented in an acceptable form. Obedience to the will of a superior is often, but not always, to be regarded as virtuous. In the case of Abraham and the alleged command of God to sacrifice his son his obedience is of a very doubtful quality. It is very difficult to recover the meaning of the whole transaction, but it seems to me that the *duty* of Abraham was to decline to carry out the

command of a cruel Deity. Abraham should have replied that, whilst professing perfect obedience to God, he could not stain his hands with the blood of his own offspring, and should have added, if the child must die he should be slain by God, and not by him, the father of the child. It is obviously extremely difficult to criticize either the command or the nature of the sacrifice demanded, but if similar circumstances occurred in savage Africa (as would not be impossible), for a cruel chief to order a father to kill his child, the reply of the father should be as suggested above. It would appear that in the case of Abraham, as well as in the probable case referred to, obedience forms only part of the object in view; the exhibition of power, unreasonable and incontestable, likewise comes into an explanation of the whole scene. Abraham's conduct in the denial of his own wife and in his relations to his concubine, Hagar, will hardly be regarded as worthy of imitation. Even allowing a great deal for oriental notions concerning women, Abraham's treatment of the latter was both mean and cruel.

It is difficult, with the material at our disposal, to reconstruct the character of Moses. Presumably the leader of a great migration, the heroic advocate of a persecuted people, the founder of a new religion, was a high-minded and noble personage, but he is badly served by his historian. It is impossible to ascertain when the history of the Exodus was written, or by whom. It cannot have been written by Moses, and the detail of the Exodus, from the intrinsic difficulties of the story, cannot approach contemporaneity or truth. It must be borne in mind also that the historian of Moses cannot be relied on, because he convicts himself as being incompetent as a witness. For the history of Moses we have no authority, no information whatever, except from the sacred Scriptures. Moses is associated in that history with the performance of several acts of magic. He was, according to the record, an Egyptian magician and a rival of other Egyptian magicians.

At the present day, there is only one explanation of ancient magic. It was wholly and entirely *deception*. It therefore is apparent that the only credentials of Moses' share in the Exodus, with all its wonders and marvels, come from a writer so credulous and so little worthy as to be a believer in the reality of Egyptian magic. The history of this credulous writer stands alone. The frequent reference to the Rod in Moses' hands, the emblem and instrument of magical power, are confirmatory of this view.

Of the story of the Exodus and of the grand career of Moses there is no confirmation from external sources. The Egyptian records and monuments reveal nothing concerning Moses or his life. The only reference to “Israel” occurs, according to Prof. Petrie, on a monument erected by the Pharaoh of the Exodus *before* that event, and narrates how he had defeated a force *in Syria* (not in Egypt) of allies, among whom were “children of Israel.” There are many indications that the historian of Moses wrote many centuries after the events he describes and when much of the detail of the great migration was lost. There is in the Book of Exodus no mention of the name of a single Pharaoh. If the names had been known they would have been used. They were probably, from lapse of time, forgotten. There is also an anachronism introduced by the writer of Miriam's song of exultation on the successful crossing of the Red Sea. It is a small matter, but points to the later years after the events. “The horse and his rider” is incorrect, inasmuch as horses were not ridden in Egypt so early as the Exodus. It is true they were at that time driven in chariots, but ridden horses, as cavalry, were not then used, and were copied from the Assyrians some time after. The conclusion we are forced to adopt, both from the history of Moses and the narrative of the Exodus, is that we do not find contemporaneity of the story and the events that would give credibility, and we cannot regard the writer from internal considerations to be entitled to implicit credit. Therefore, in default of

reliable history, we fail to appreciate very highly the life and character of the great leader.

The last typical character to which I propose to refer is the greatest personage in Jewish history—the hero who, although he was not the first king, practically founded the monarchy and the only enduring dynasty, King David. For the purposes of example he is impossible. The favourite of God possessed doubtless many good if not great qualities, but his cruelty to his enemies and his crimes preclude him altogether being used as an example. The crime he committed in order to obtain possession of a woman, the wife of another, is, even as an act of an oriental despot, peculiarly mean as well as cruel. In their relations with women the Bourbon kings of France practised immoralities on a large scale, but they were usually gentlemen. Allowing for the difference in period, King David was equally immoral, but he added cruelty and treachery.

Mr. Montefiore's question can be answered in many ways, but the most destructive of all arguments against the Judaic system is the sacerdotal system and sacrificial practices connected with it. The modern thinker feels very strongly on this subject. It seems impossible to estimate too highly the numerous objections to priestly rule and a priestly system. The believer in human progress has no phrases too strong with which to denounce sacerdotalism in all its manifestations. Sacerdotalism is the enemy of progress, and as a social force it has been found everywhere tyrannical and corrupt. The maintenance of a numerous hereditary priesthood would be a crushing burden on the people in a small and not wealthy country like Palestine. But I prefer to direct attention more to the intellectual than to the economic evils which a sacerdotal system like the Jewish would produce. Priestly rule causes intellectual sterility wherever and whenever it has been attempted. The influences of a priesthood not recruited from the people would be more pernicious even than any of these systems with which we are better

acquainted. But an hereditary caste of priests would be a curse to the people who unhappily supported them. And this sacerdotal system is the groundwork of the Mosaic polity. It was a poor contrivance at best to perform public services, but when it became a great power in the administration of public affairs, and in fact was the Government during the period of the second Temple, its evil methods became apparent. I should hope that the most orthodox of Jews would pause before accepting such a system, so fatal and so pernicious in all its influences, as the revealed will of God, and as a system to be preserved and revered. It unhappily exists in an extremely modified form to this day; and a reply may be given to Mr. Montefiore's question in the terms that the ceremony of the blessing of the Cohanim is so great an absurdity, that an earnest man cannot sanction by his presence the public performance of persons, of mean lives and possibly doubtful character, solely because their name is Cohen, as the delegates of the Almighty, speaking in his name and conferring his blessing. In all seriousness, these are practices which are much more honoured in the breach than in the performance.

The Pentateuch sanctions and legalizes the greatest hindrances to progress and civilization in permitting polygamy and in maintaining slavery. The Hebrew form of slavery compared unfavourably with the Egyptian slavery, the evils of which have lingered so long in the minds of our race. The master of a Hebrew slave was little punished for the murder of the slave, and then only if the death occurred within a very short time after receiving the injury. The master of an Egyptian slave suffered the punishment of death for the murder of his slave; and, moreover, in Egypt there were temples left open for the reception of fugitive slaves. The practice of polygamy was permitted by the Mosaic Law. In fact the Mosaic legislation was, as a whole, only occasionally marked by a higher standard of morals than existed in the surrounding nations.

The Egyptians were a merciful people towards animals and the Jews followed them in this direction.

The Jews have long since abandoned the practice of polygamy and other oriental customs, to their great benefit and advantage, but the truth remains untouched by these changes, viz. that the Jews possess a law, which they regard as of divine origin, which sanctions many practices wholly opposed to modern civilization and injurious, according to our modern ideas, both to the family and to the State, and that this law is in the Synagogue taught as a perfect law, and the scroll of the Law is still held up during the Synagogue services, as Mr. Montefiore points out, and declared to be God's law and a perfect law.

Mr. Montefiore contributes some excellent remarks as to "what Judaism stands for." I refer to his passages without quoting them. I quite agree with all he has said, but he suppresses a great deal. Judaism undoubtedly stands for two great doctrines, the belief in the unity of God and the belief in the moral government of the world, and those doctrines liberal Jews wholly accept. Judaism stands for a great deal more, to which general acceptance cannot be given. Judaism as a faith rests on authority. It is built up on divine revelation. It has its inspired advocates. It deals largely in miracles. It cherishes a doctrine of chosen people. It establishes a priesthood, possessing powers by inheritance. It ordains a sacrificial system of great complexity. It imposes numerous ceremonies and repulsive rites; and, lastly, it separates the Jewish people, for whom the religion is established, from the remainder of mankind. Every one of these doctrines, laws, and institutions the modern thinker wholly repudiates. The liberal Jews, if they accept the modern methods and modes of thought, deny authority such as is claimed for Judaism. They deny revelation and inspiration, and cynically suggest that there is too much of both in the world to believe in any. The liberal Jews do not accept miracles. They cease as the knowledge of natural phenomena in-

creases. The claim to be a chosen people is denied as unproved and unprovable, and is as repulsive as the rite associated with that doctrine. On these great questions the position of the liberal Jews is perfectly clear. That position may be summed up as that of the modern thinker, deeply impressed with the results of modern discovery and modern thought, with pride in the vast conquests over ignorance in the recent past, and with unlimited hope and defiant exultation in the expected victories of the future. And what is the present attitude of the ancient faith? It is truly a fossil, possessing the form though not the activities of a living body striving to maintain a belief that is passing away, but still hostile in thought, if not in words, to modern progress, and most pathetically hoping for changes that will never come, and for the support and strength that the future will never bring.

I had intended to express an opinion on the question of mixed marriages, as on that subject I cannot agree with Mr. Montefiore. But space is limited, and I must content myself with the remark that, as I regard the separation of Jews from all other peoples an unmixed evil—and I class the maintenance of a type in the same category—I strongly advocate mixed marriages. We have outgrown the belief in restraints of the kind, and I venture to think the illustration of the disapprobation of the Roman Church to mixed marriages used by Mr. Montefiore is not comparable to the tribal or racial restraints imposed by Judaism. Mr. Montefiore in conclusion speaks of the mission of the Jews. I object to the phrase, but I willingly accept the precept. The Jews represent undoubtedly the grand doctrine of the Unity of God. Among all thoughtful Jews it is a passion as much as a belief. I do not believe that the Jews are played out. I do not urge that they have no uses in the world. I am opposed, perhaps hostile, to historic Judaism, with its ancient usages, customs, and rites. I have said in this REVIEW that they are still the oldest, most consistent, and most zealous advocates of the most fundamental of

all religious doctrines. The real difficulty lies with the Scriptures. Without the unreasonable belief in the sacred writings, almost peculiar to Jews, they would be simple Theists. To that end liberal Jews must strive. The thoughtful and sceptical student cannot rest content with *negations*; a positive faith is an essential to most men. Liberal Judaism or Theism, call it as you will, supplies that need.

There are some valuable observations in Mr. Montefiore's article on the advantages of an historic belief, or a belief with an ancient origin. It gives the idea of permanence which a new religion would not possess. The time, too, is appropriate for the advocacy of such views. The study of nature has become of late much more theistic than materialistic. The old teleology has reappeared, but much changed. It is not the "thing," but the "plan," which indicates mind and will. These opinions the liberal Jew has long held. I can conceive no higher or grander programme than that of the ancient people preaching not a new religion, but a new interpretation of an old and revered faith. It has been the opprobrium of Jews that their attachment to their old beliefs prevented them marching with the times. To some extent that taunt is true; how much so it is needless to inquire. But great changes may come in the future, and, if liberal Jews or Jewish Theists desire it earnestly and seriously, *will* come, and Jews will again become the religious teachers of the world. They will not reappear as teachers of supernatural doctrines contained in a supernatural book, but as diligent and serious students as well as teachers of nature and of the wonders of the universe. They will teach, too, the highest morality, illustrated by the lives of the greatest and best of mankind throughout all recorded time, and the ultimate object of all their teaching will be to influence conduct and to eradicate evil. And one great doctrine taught will be the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of peoples. Favourites of the Almighty, either individuals or peoples,

will fail to be held up as examples. But universal justice will be preached and, let us hope, ultimately practised. For worship, the student of nature never hesitates or doubts; he rises necessarily to the contemplation of, and with deep reverence for, the Author of the Universe, regarding him alone as the Creator of matter and Governor and Controller of all things, but, above and beyond these conceptions, as the just and merciful Father of all.

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